U.S. Department of the Interior – Bureau of Reclamation

SAN LUIS DRAINAGE FEATURE RE-EVALUATION

Briefing for Environmental Interests
Meeting Summary
October 8, 2002 – San Francisco, California

The Bureau of Reclamation's San Luis Drainage Feature Re-evaluation Team provided a project update briefing to environmental interests. Jason Phillips reviewed the current status of the Feature Re-evaluation. The presentation and discussion covered land retirement, drainage volume and source control, the in-valley alternative and evaporation ponds, the Delta discharge alternative, and cost and financing.

Meeting Participants

Terry Young, Environmental Defense
Ann Hayden, Environmental Defense
Tom Graff, Environmental Defense
Gary Bobker, Bay Institute
Patricia Port, OEPC/DOI
Lisa Holm, Contra Costa Water District
Hal Candee, NRDC
John Kopchik, Contra Costa County
Abby Fateman, Contra Costa County
Terry Cooke, URS
Marian Echeverria, Reclamation
Jason Phillips, Reclamation
Charles Gardiner, PAM

Meeting participants provide the following questions and comments for Reclamation.

Land Retirement

- Have 68,400 acres been identified? Are these acres from the Area 1/Area 2 settlement?

  The 68,400 acres are part of the Westlands settlement agreement of the Area 1/Area 2 case. Westlands has not identified the specific locations yet. Reclamation made some general assumptions about the location of these lands for the No Action Alternative.

- What assumptions did you make about future CVPIA retirement?

  Reclamation assumed that there would be no further land retirement under the CVPIA land retirement program because there are not funds currently appropriated for this program.

- Where does Britz settlement fit in?

  It will become part of the no-action alternative

- Isn't there a commitment to fund the Britz settlement using money from the Restoration Fund?

  This has no bearing on the assumptions for this investigation regarding land retirement.

- Reasonable and beneficial use provision – Are there any assumptions about lands being classified as non-irrigable?

Our assumption is that Reclamation will continue to provide water to irrigate lands in the SLU. Changing this assumption is not an alternative means of providing drainage service.

- Have you considered inducements to get people to accept drainwater?

  Reclamation has not considered inducements at this stage of the Feature Re-evaluation.

- Isn't land retirement part of source control, treatment, etc?

  The source control measures do not include land retirement, because land retirement does not provide drainage service and it is not reasonable to assume the District will retire land to reduce the volume of drainage service required.

- How would land retirement be implemented?

  Information about the CVPIA land retirement program is available on Reclamation's web site. The settlement parties are discussing how Westlands proposed land retirement would be implemented.

Drainage Volume and Source Control

- What is the service area?

  The service area includes all of the San Luis Unit and those areas of the Grassland Drainage Area outside the San Luis Unit.

- Where does the definition of drainage service come from?

  Reclamation's interpretation of the Court Order and previous studies is that the judge has ordered Reclamation to develop a means to collect and dispose drainage water.

- Is there a policy document about the interpretations of drainage service? Can you provide reasoning behind the interpretation of the court order?

  There is currently no policy document. A plan that included some land retirement was presented in 1991 to the District and the Court and it was rejected. We would expect the same rejection today if the plan were presented to the Court.

- Reclamation is not looking at alternatives that manage drainwater on individual farms.

  Reclamation has reviewed potential source control measures to identify those that are cost-effective measures for reducing drainwater. Reclamation used this analysis to determine the volume of drainwater that Reclamation will accept for reuse, treatment, and disposal.

- Why is the cost of the irrigation system improvements so high? There are cost effective measures that would be included. Recheck the cost assumptions and consider available grant money.

  Reclamation will provide additional detail on the cost analysis for irrigation system improvement. As Reclamation refines its source control analysis, some cost-effective irrigation improvements will likely be included.

- Which alternatives did you compare costs for source control measures?

Reclamation compared source control costs to the drainage disposal costs for all alternatives.

- What have you assumed about implementing tiles? Have you looked at different volumes of drainage?

  Farmers would install tiles as they are cost-effective. Reclamation projected drainage volumes through 2050, including implementation of source control measures.

- What is the net drainage volume?

  With implementation of source control measures and regional reuse facilities, the total drainage volume would be approximately 30,000 acre-feet per year.

In-Valley Alternative and Evaporation Ponds

- Are you considering solar evaporation ponds?

  The team has determined that solar ponds are not cost effective in the current plan. Reclamation will continue to consider them as more detailed evaluation continues.

- What kind of hazing and mitigation have you assumed?

  At this stage, mitigation is included as a general cost item until additional detail is developed and consultation with the regulatory agencies continues.

Delta Discharge Alternative

- Total Organic Carbon (TOC) and bromides are key issues for drinking water. Are you looking at various volumes (load based)?

  Little data on bromide and TOC concentrations in shallow groundwater in the drainage impacted area or under reuse facilities exist. Reclamation is evaluating the need to collect additional data. Reclamation is evaluating the impact of the discharge (concentration and flow rate) on the water quality and bioaccumulation of the Bay-Delta as appropriate to the constituent.

- Has the Bay and Delta flow model been peer-reviewed?

  The Fischer-Delta model (used for TDS) has been peer reviewed. The MIKE 21 Bay model has been extensively reviewed by an expert panel assembled by NOAA as a part of its original use in the San Francisco Runways Reconfiguration Project being conducted for the FAA and City of San Francisco. The selenium bioaccumulation model is currently undergoing internal peer review.

- Have you looked at Mallard Slough? Antioch has water right that CCWD uses when water quality is good enough.

  The water quality modeling examined all areas of the Bay-Delta.

- What selenium bioaccumulation effect levels are used in the model?

  Reclamation is using effects levels based on published reports and regulations.

- What happens if Congress doesn't like any of the alternatives? The court cannot compel Congress to act.

  Reclamation is developing a recommended plan for the decision-makers to consider.

Cost and Financing

- Are you looking at public/private partnerships?

  Reclamation is receiving technical information about treatment technologies from the private sector. No decisions have been made about how the selected alternative would be implemented.

- Are you going to show alternative financing approaches?

  Repayment options will be displayed in the EIS for the preferred alternative.

- Reclamation should provide information about costs and who pays. Is it Westlands, SLU, or all CVP?

Other Questions

- How would you include deep well injection in the analysis if it were found feasible?

  If initial studies show that deep well injection could be feasible and cost-effective for disposing substantial volumes of drainwater, Reclamation could adjust the in-valley alternative to incorporate this disposal method and effectively reduce the area of evaporation ponds required.

- What happens if some new information becomes available? Are you looking at an adaptive management plan for alternatives? Is there a way to build in consecutive decisions? Does this constrain future latitude to adapt?

  The team is considering flexibility to adapt to changing information or regulations as one of the evaluation criteria.

- What additional authorization would you need?

  Congress would have to authorize additional funds to implement the selected alternative.

Comments and Suggestions

- Reclamation should look at the size of the district requiring drainage. Service may reduce from economics and/or lands becoming non-irrigable.
- Add the CCWD water intake on Old River to the Delta model.
- Presser/Luoma model is thorough and sufficient to address selenium impacts.
- The December report should show the routes of the pipelines.
- Reclamation should brief Congressman Dooley on the analysis results.
- Show amount of money that is planned for use in land retirement.

- Reclamation should look at full alternatives that consider all management approaches, including land retirement. Reclamation's drainage service work plan should include milestones where Reclamation could consider and adapt to new options or information.
- Reclamation should consider that it has the right to refuse water service to non-irrigable lands.